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CHAPTER XXVIII

ON NAMES AND NAME GIVING

"Samaria..... Samaria!.....SA-MA-RIA!" 551
and yet again "O Samaria!" in a more impatient tone of voice. With such calls were my ears greeted as I was passing through the village toward my home one day. I had not heard the call before and wondered what it meant and was all alert, ready to set down a new word. Upon arriving at the hut I asked the chief what it could be, and he told me that Samaria was the name of a little girl. "That is curious," I remarked. "How did she come by such a name?" "Oh," replied he, "I one day heard you speaking about Samaria and I thought it sounded so nice that I borrowed it and gave it to a little girl who was as yet unnamed." Mrs. Samaria is still living and is now a grandmother. She is the daughter of old Mr. Bright, whom I have already mentioned. Penri's wife's name was Orosia and he told me that it was an imitation of the name Russian.

The chief seemed to copy a good deal. One day I 000
came unexpectedly to the hut when I heard him speaking in quite a loud voice. There sat the old fellow, nearly drunk, with a congregation of ancients in front of him, *preaching* of all things in the world! His subject was Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, and he was giving it in different tones of voice, making a dialogue of it between God, Adam, Eve and the serpent. I suddenly popped my head into the hut, when there was a mighty roar of laughter! The sermon ended quite in a hurry, and I then had my innings.

After a few years Penri asked me to become name- 553
maker to the village. Sometime later, sixteen women

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553 sent to ask me to provide names for their babies and I spent a whole day and night in thinking them out. I found it to be a very difficult task. They came at the appointed time to receive names, but just as I was beginning, in walked two more happy mothers, each with a baby for me to name! There was no time for consideration and the only thing I could think of just then was "that blessed word *Mesopotamia*!" Nothing else would come, so I took a leaf out of Penri's book and called the boy *Mesa* and the girl *Potamia*. These did very well. So there are at the present time a Samaria and a Potamia about Piratori, who have grown up and are grandmothers.

551 There were no surnames among the people when I first knew them. Each individual, whether male or female, had but one name. Nor did the woman change her name upon marriage. Thus Penri was simply Penri, and Orosia had no other name than Orosia. Later, however, it was found necessary to add a surname for registration purposes. As a rule, they took the name of their native village. Thus, Piratori was [178] called by the Japanese Hiramura, so that every person born in this place was registered as a Hiramura. In this way Penri came later to be called Hiramura Penri and his wife Hiramura Orosia.

553 To his other duties I found that chief Penri added that of name-maker to the village children, and he told me that he often found it a very difficult problem to think out fitting ones for the candidates. When he asked me to take over the job, I requested him to give me all the information he could as to how the names should be made up. What now follows will embody the advice he was then good enough to give me.

Said he, "Be very careful not to use the name of anyone who has died, for that name is sacred to the deceased, who is still known by it to the gods, demons and his ancestors in the nether world. Though out of [775] their material bodies, the departed ones are always

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alive in the spirit kingdom and carry their names with them. Should the name of a departed one be applied to a boy or girl in our world, it would grieve the soul of the dead one and call forth displeasure. Some sickness or other evil would be sure to follow, for the spirits of the dead can and do act upon the living for good or ill, when they have a mind to do so. For this reason, no person may take the name of a deceased parent, friend or ancestor.

"Names," continued my friend, "are lucky or unlucky as the case may be. They bring good fortune if rightly applied, and ill fortune if bestowed wrongly. In themselves, names are living beings, and, like the persons to whom they are given, they have separate personal identities and must therefore be treated with due respect." This is a wonderful doctrine which I found fully believed in.

A sickly young girl came to me one day and asked if I would kindly change her name. "But what is the matter with your name? Why do you wish me to change it?" I asked. The poor thing replied, "I am always ailing and I believe it is because my name does not fit me." And with a big sigh she added, "Please take it off me and bestow on me another." I thereupon told her that her name was changed from that moment into Reishipi, and this means, in Ainu, "a changed name." She at once imagined herself much better and went away fully satisfied. The new name evidently fitted her, for she soon got married and brought up a family afterwards.

Penri, continuing his instructions, added, "One must be very careful not to give a child the name of any other person, for a name can only rightly belong to one individual. If several persons were called by the same name, it would confuse gods and demons alike, as well as people here and those gone before. The gods would bless or curse the wrong persons, and the demons would not know for certain which party

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553 was to be punished, and so make blunders. And in this way what was meant for one would go to another." Truly an Ainu may say, "He who steals my purse steals trash, but he who steals my good name steals all."

I was also told a name should be euphonious and have a good and happy meaning. Moreover, it must be full and proper Ainu. And so it will be seen that I let myself in for a good deal when I undertook the task of making up names.

One of my first essays at it was a bit of a failure. A certain weak young woman came to me one day and said she was quite certain her name, which I had given her, was making her ill. Its daily influence on her was bad and kept her ailing. It was angry about something, so would I be kind enough to take it off her and bestow a new one. I thought I would then try to work Rebekah in, and so by a slight change made it *Rei-peka*, and this means in Ainu the "fitting name." It was a beautiful shot and the result was very good, for she felt better, she said. And thinking so she was so, no doubt, and improved daily.

Name-giving did not as a rule take place till the child was two or three years old and some particular habit had been formed or trait of character manifested. There was no special public and religious ceremony connected with it. Only just the usual family fetishes made and offered, and a prayer said by the father. The chief would simply enter a hut, salute the gods and people, explain why he had come, and then call the child by the name he had chosen. He would then salute the child, the Goddess of Fire, and the household god and the parents. He made a small present to the candidate. This finished, he would sit, talk, eat and drink of such things as were available at the time. For a boy, the present was a sword-guard, a knife or a wine cup. The sword-guard implied defence from evil, and the wine cup that he was to become a family priest. The girl got a piece of cloth as a rule, and,

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sometimes some beads or earrings, or a sword-guard. Such things were greatly prized and carefully put away.

As I came to know the people and their language better, I found that some of them had not very nice names, while others were all that could be desired. Bright, Graceful, The Beauty, Cheerful-face, Peace of Heaven, Grace of God, Bird-mouth, Deer-catcher and such like names were all very well, but I could not say much for Pot-belly, Big-eyes, Saucepan, Chop-sticks, Sooty, Filthy, Rubbish and so forth. But one could not perhaps wonder, seeing how difficult it was to make well-meaning and euphonious brand-new names for every one of them!

During all the time I was with the chief I never once heard Mrs. Penri mention her husband's name. She never on any occasion called him by it. Nor did we ever hear our servants do so to each other, either. To Penri, the wife was always Orosia, but never once did she ever address him as Penri. The special lore concerning this point is as follows: "The wife should not pronounce her husband's name, for the bare fact of mentioning it aloud is equal to killing him, for it takes somewhat away from his life. Women should therefore be very careful in this matter." When speaking of her husband, a woman uses such terms as these: "My Ainu," "My man," "My person," "The head of the hearth," "He who has bound me," "Floor," "So-and So's father," and, at times, though rarely, "My husband." Thus the husband's name may not be "taken in vain."

Continuing to speak on this matter, the Chief said, "It is the special duty of men to worship the gods, while the women must not presume to pray. When the people are sick, it matters not whether they be old or young, male or female, the men should without fail draw nigh to the deities and do worship. The husband, as head of the house, is the one who should